CHICAGO RIVER BASCULE BRIDGE, LASALLE STREET
I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor
North LaSalle Street crossing the Chicago River
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HAER No. IL-66

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

CHICAGO RIVER BASCULE BRIDGE, LASALLE STREET
I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor

HAER No. IL-66

Location:	I & M Canal National Heritage Corridor North LaSalle Street crossing the Chicago River Chicago, Cook County, Illinois UTM: 16 E.447100 N.4636080 Quad: Chicago Loop
Date of Construction:	1928
Designer:	Donald Becker
Engineer:	Thomas G. Pihlfeldt
Builder:	Strobel Steel Construction Company
Present Owner:	City of Chicago
Present Use:	Vehicular Bridge
Significance:	The development of the Chicago trunnion bascule bridge occurred during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Despite the controversy over patent infringement -- Joseph E. Strauss charged the City of Chicago engineers with infringing on his patented Strauss-Trunion bascule bridge -- the Chicago bascule received great acclaim within the civil engineering profession. The LaSalle Street Bridge was erected in the late 1920s after Chicago's city engineers had refined their design of the trunion bascule span.
Project Information:	The Illinois and Michigan Canal was designated a National Heritage Corridor in 1984. The following year HABS/HAER embarked on an extensive inventory and documentation project of the 100 mile-long corridor. Field work for this project was concluded in 1988. Final editing of the documentation was completed in 1992.
Historians:	Charles Scott, Frances Alexander, and John Nicolay, 1986.

In 1899 a Chicago Board of Consulting Engineers decided that the trunnion bascule bridge was the most suitable bridge design for the Chicago River. The trunnion bascule design, with its minimum number of moving parts, efficiently and practically accommodated the heavy land and water traffic over the Chicago River. The LaSalle street bridge was constructed in 1928. The superstructure of the bridge was built by the Strobel Steel Construction Company. Thomas G. Pihlfeldt was the consulting engineer and Donald Becker was the designer. The bridge is virtually identical to the Clark Street Bridge.

The LaSalle Street bridge is a single-deck, double-leaf, trunnion bascule bridge. The bridge measures 242'-0" from center to center of the trunnions and has a clear span of 220'-0". The superstructure is a steel pony truss with riveted gusset-plate connections. Width measures 86'-0". The abutments are reinforced concrete with a rusticated concrete veneer. Bridge tenders' houses, on each side of lift span, display an eclectic combination of Neo-Classical and Second Empire styles. The bridge tender's house are identical in design with lightly scored concrete veneers with chamfered corners and ornamental pilasters, a sopraporta (overdoor) with a decorative arch, a mansard-like tin roof with a raised diamond pattern, and a large stylized cartouche with swags. There are numerous multi-light windows along the facade of the pylons with large, one-over-one-light, double-hung, sash windows below a denticulated cornice.

SOURCES:

"Aesthetic Design for Drawbridges," Engineering News, v. 70 (November 6, 1913): 926.

"Chicago Bascule Bridge- Design and Operating Features," Engineering News-Record, v. 85 (September 9, 1920): 508-514.

Donald N. Becker, "Development of the Chicago Type Bascule Bridge," Transactions of the American Society of Civil Engineering, v. 109 (1944): 995-1046.

Donald N. Becker, "The Story of Chicago's Bridges," Midwest Engineer, 2 (January 1950): 3-9.

Chicago Department of Public Works, Chicago Public Works: A History (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1973).

"The Chicago Type of Bascule Bridge, " Engineering Record, v. 42 (July 21, 1900): 50-53.